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Foundation®

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Mr Peter Rogers
Acting Research Director
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
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Dear Mr Rogers

Heart Foundation feedback on the Inquiry on strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland

The Heart Foundation welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Inquiry on strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland. We are strong advocates for planning physical environments that lessen the opportunity for crime, making places safer and more accessible for all people to be physically active more often. This submission therefore focusses on the second term of reference, the social and economic contributors to crime.

Increasing safety around walking, cycling and public transport use is a high priority. We want more Queenslanders to be more active, more often. As more people walk or cycle, their participation in physical activity increases, which helps to reduce risk factors and improve cardiovascular health in the population. People who use public transport are more active, walking an extra half hour every day compared to car users¹.

The recent tragic murder of a French student in Brisbane while walking from public transport to her home highlighted the need for good safety infrastructure such as adequate lighting, but also the repercussions of increased perceptions of danger in the community and negative economic impacts on tourism and international study. We need to reduce crime in our neighbourhoods, especially around public transport hubs, and our walking and cycling routes.

A key goal to promoting walking and physical activity is to create walkable streets for people of all ages and abilities. If a streetscape meets the needs of people aged between four and 80 years, the visually impaired and wheelchair users, then it provides a safer and more pleasurable walking experience for all individuals. Incorporating [Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design](#) (CPTED) principles is recommended.

CPTED is a crime prevention strategy which outlines how physical environments can be designed in order to lessen the opportunity for crime. This is achieved by creating environmental and social conditions that:

- maximise risk to offenders (increasing the likelihood of detection, challenge and apprehension)
- maximise the effort required to commit crime (increasing the time, energy and resources required to commit crime)
- minimise the actual and perceived benefits of crime (removing, minimising or concealing crime attractors and rewards)
- minimise excuse making opportunities (removing conditions that encourage/facilitate rationalisation of inappropriate behaviour).

CPTED concepts and principles are ideally incorporated at the design stage of a development, but can also be applied to existing developments and areas where crime and safety are a concern. Some simple strategies may include improved lighting, natural community surveillance, security cameras, emergency phones and landscape treatments with low vegetation that soften the harsh edges of a park or trail while maintaining visibility and eliminating hiding spaces for potential criminals.

The perception of safety removes a major barrier to people walking and riding bicycles. Creating an attractive, usable, well-maintained environment where people feel safer to live, work and travel and have a visual connection to the public realm will encourage more physical activity.

The RESIDE project in Perth, Western Australia is a longitudinal natural experiment of people building houses and relocating to 73 new housing developments across Perth. A key finding was that an increase in fear of crime was associated with a decrease in residents' walking in the local neighbourhood, suggesting a causal relationship. For each increase in fear of crime (measured as one level on a five-point Likert scale) total walking decreased by 22 mins per week, recreational walking by 13 mins per week and transport walking by 7 mins per week².

We have evidence to show that making streets more walking and cycling friendly is good for business too. Dr Rodney Tolley prepared a report for the Heart Foundation entitled [Good for Busine\\$\\$](#)³ which shows the direct economic benefits from developing communities that are more walking and cycling friendly.

Designing streets for activity adds economic value to an area, through increased retail values, higher rents, attraction of new tenants and businesses and increased sale prices of nearby homes. Larger volumes of pedestrian and bicycle riding activity generate more business and stimulate the local economy. Local areas are revitalised and become vibrant places people want to visit.

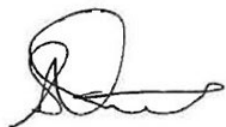
Current overweight and obesity trends need urgent and innovative action. This includes action from non-health sectors such as crime prevention. The prevalence of overweight and obesity has been steadily increasing in Queensland, with nearly two-thirds (64.9%) of adults now overweight or obese based on measured body mass index⁴. This causes a significant burden on our health system, as for nearly every marker of chronic disease; people who are overweight or obese are more likely to have abnormal results.

Physical inactivity is a major health problem in its own right and is linked to weight gain and a range of chronic diseases. One of the Heart Foundation's strategic goals is to increase the levels of physical activity in our community. With just over half (56%) of Queenslanders being physically active enough to achieve health benefits⁵, we need to provide built environments, legislation, policies and programs that support people to be active.

In particular, we want to see children walking, riding bicycles or scooters and catching public transport to and from school, from their early years to establish lifelong healthy behaviours. To achieve this, we need parents and children to believe that this is a safe choice.

We are available for consultation if required and look forward to hearing the outcomes.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Vines
Chief Executive Officer

References

- ¹ An Australian vision for Active Transport (2011) Australian Local Government Association, Bus Industry Confederation, Cycling Promotion Fund, National Heart Foundation of Australia, International Association of Public Transport.
- ² Sarah Foster, Matthew Knuiman, Paula Hooper, Hayley Christian, Billie Giles-Corti. Do changes in residents' fear of crime impact their walking? Longitudinal results from RESIDE. *Preventive Medicine* 62 (2014) 161–166.
- ³ Tolley, R. (2011). Good for Busine\$\$\$. The benefits of making streets more walking and cycling friendly. Adelaide: Report commissioned by National Heart Foundation of Australia (South Australian division).
- ⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013). 4364.0.55.005 - Australian Health Survey: Biomedical Results for Chronic Diseases, 2011-12 <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4364.0.55.005Main+Features12011-12?OpenDocument>
- ⁵ Queensland Health (2012). The health of Queenslanders 2012: advancing good health. Fourth report of the Chief Health Officer Queensland.